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## Encyclopedia of Environmental Change [book review]

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*The Encyclopedia of Environmental Change* is essentially the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Editor John A. Mathew's 2001 work, the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Environmental Change*. Environmental change is a broad concept, and for this work includes not only climate change, but change affecting the earth from the Pre-Quaternary period through the present and even potential future environmental changes. Emphasis is not only on the natural sciences but also relevant disciplines involving physical, chemical, and biological processes and applied sciences such as engineering and agriculture. Even the social sciences and humanities are included to address human effects on the environment.

Although the word dictionary is removed from the title in the revised edition, it doesn't change the fact that entries are very short, and more in common with a dictionary than an encyclopedia. For example, of the over 4,000 main entries only 80 have a length that approaches 1,000 words. Noticeably different from the first edition is the size of the Encyclopedia, increasing from one to three volumes, and doubling in pages to over 1,300. In the revision over 800 new entries were created, while existing ones were thoroughly updated and expanded. The set is primarily text based, with only two hundred or so black and white figures present.

The beginning of each volume provides a list of entries included in the set, yet this seems unnecessary as the entries are in alphabetical order within the volumes, and the list doesn't provide any additional information. Volume three contains an almost two hundred page index to the set, which allows one to locate concepts that may not have their own entry. Beyond the index, there are no value added features included.

As mentioned earlier, the entries are short in content, but most offer at least one and often several updated references for further information. If other entries are referenced within an entry, they are indicated by capitalization. "See also" references accompany many entries, which help direct attention to related topics and allow for a fuller exploration of the subject. A review of the entries makes it difficult to understand how the terms were chosen. Environmental change is a broad concept and one would think the terms included actually represent some aspect of change. However, there are many terms like *mud* and *dominant wind* and *nadir point* whose descriptions don't reflect this theme, but rather fall under the broad umbrella of the environment. Because of this all-encompassing approach

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and more importantly the short entries, it is difficult to imagine how a source like this will be useful to undergraduate students. Those looking for quick definitions are more likely to find a serviceable answer on the Internet. Even when specialized terms are not located through a quick Google Search, students are more apt to move on rather than seek out a print dictionary. This source would have much greater value if it fully embraced the role of an encyclopedia and provided longer, more extensive descriptions of topics. This would require a focused subject approach, and if done well would include more images, diagrams, and value added features. As is, *The Encyclopedia of Environmental Change* remains a dictionary, despite the name change, and is hard to justify under the budgetary constraints faced by most libraries, especially at a cost of \$475. Libraries are best served directing their dollars elsewhere.